

“Ideas Book” from the Morgan Hill Community Forum on Tourism

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Morgan Hill Community Forum on Tourism

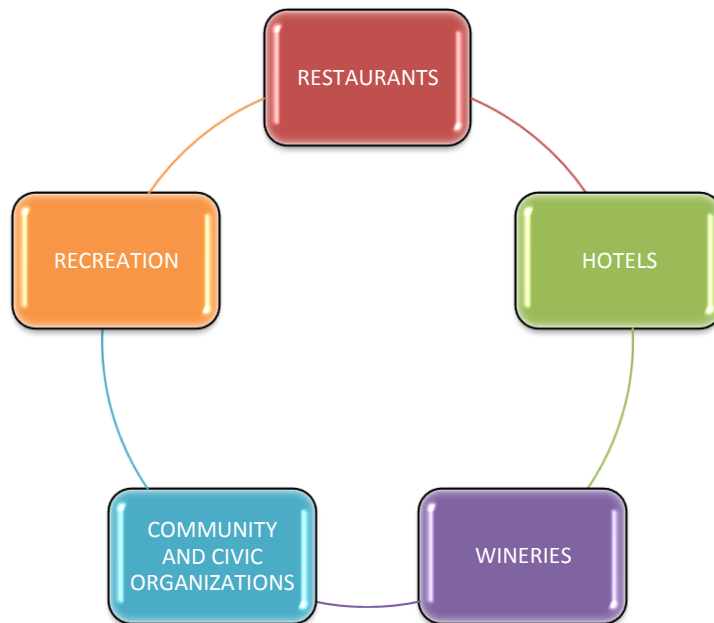
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Tourism Alliance

In January 2013, a group of community members representing the wine, hotel, restaurant, and sports recreation industries came together along with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Association, the Wineries of Santa Clara County and the Morgan Hill Wine Advocates to form a Tourism Alliance with the purpose to collaborate on a developing a common vision to advance tourism strategies in Morgan Hill.



Alliance member included the following:

Name	Organization(s)
David Dworkin	Holiday Inn Express
Greg Richtarek	Guglielmo Winery/WSCV
Michael Sampognaro	Morgan Hill Cellars Winery/ WSCV
John McKay	Wine Advocates
Marty Cheek	Wine Advocates
Jon Hatakeyama	Friend of Wineries of Santa Clara Valley
Dennis Kennedy	MH Downtown Association/Wine Advocates
Majid Bahriny	MH Downtown Association/PBID/Gilroy Tourism
Rich Firato	MH Chamber of Commerce
Jeff Dixon	Sports Recreation/MHYSA
Maureen Tobin	City of Morgan Hill
Edith Ramirez	City of Morgan Hill

The Community Forum on Tourism was a true collaboration between all of the following organizations, which contributed time and financial resources to execute an event that would be focused and targeted to the key stakeholders and at the same time, welcoming to the entire community.

Event Sponsors Included:

- The Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce
- Morgan Hill Downtown Association
- Morgan Hill Downtown PBID
- Wineries of Santa Clara Valley
- Mama Mia's Restaurant
- Holiday Inn Express
- Morgan Hill Youth Sports Alliance
- Morgan Hill Wine Advocates
- Grow Morgan Hill Fund
- City of Morgan Hill



Priority Action Steps

In January 2013, a group of community and business organizations representing the restaurant, hotel, wine and recreation industries as well as the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Association, PBID, the Wineries of Santa Clara Valley and the Morgan Hill Wine Advocates came together to form a Tourism Alliance to develop a collaborative approach to tourism promotion in Morgan Hill.

On April 18, 2013, the Tourism Alliance held the first Community Forum on Tourism at Mama Mia's Restaurant. The event engaged over 80 community and business participants that came together to identify ideas and opportunities to increase tourism in Morgan Hill. The forum also included a panel of Morgan Hill industry experts from the restaurant, hotel, wine and recreation industries. The panel shared information on industry trends and specifically addressed how these industries are doing in Morgan Hill and what can be done to support more tourism in the area.

The Tourism Forum held an "Open MarketPlace" exercise where people were able to propose an idea that they thought would increase tourism in Morgan Hill and hold a session on that particular idea. This allowed for people to choose the sessions that they felt were interesting or important. Ten concurrent sessions took place and approximately 70 ideas were identified. The following were the key themes that emerged from the event:

- a) Develop a common message that brands Morgan Hill as a tourism destination.
- b) Develop a central community calendar of events that is all-inclusive, comprehensive and user-friendly.
- c) Develop marketing collateral that "tells the full story" of the amenities Morgan Hill has to offer, including wineries, restaurants, recreational venues, open space, pick-your-own farms and ranches; and that identifies Downtown and other shopping opportunities.
- d) Cross-promote local businesses by having businesses act as concierges, directing visitors to other attractions.
- e) Develop a wine-signage program that includes freeway signage and a multijurisdictional wine trail.
- f) Activate Downtown and offer more activities for the visitor in addition to dining and shopping.
- g) Grow the recreational offerings and attract more sporting events.

Background

Thoughtful planning has made Morgan Hill one of the most desirable communities in Santa Clara County. Located in Silicon Valley, Morgan Hill is just 10 miles south of San Jose and is home to a population of 40,000 residents and 17,500 employees. Morgan Hill is known for its superb quality of life and state-of-the art recreational facilities. In 2012, Morgan Hill was recognized as the fastest growing community in Santa Clara County and the tenth fastest growing in California.

Morgan Hill's ideal location in Silicon Valley offers the opportunity for year 'round recreational activities, including cycling, golfing, swimming and boating. The beautiful tree and grass-covered hills contain numerous hiking trails. Residents and visitors enjoy world-class recreational facilities, the proximity to golf courses, lakes and outstanding county and state parks for outdoor activities.

About 1.3 million people visit Morgan Hill each year to enjoy exceptional sports facilities. The Morgan Hill Outdoor Sports Center hosts over 30 events per year drawing over 500,000 local, regional and national visitors annually for soccer, lacrosse, football, rugby, field hockey and Ultimate Frisbee and other events. With 38 acres of grass and synthetic fields, the Outdoor Sports Center can be configured from 11 to 25 fields and accommodate parking for up to 2,000 cars.

The Morgan Hill Aquatics Center hosts an average of 15 swim meets per year, with each event drawing 200-4,000 swimmers and their families. During the summer months, the facility's pools, water slides, and play features make it a regional destination generating over 60,000 visits for Summer Recreation Swim. The well maintained competition pool, facility layout and amenities, available equipment and easy access to nearby accommodations have all contributed to the success of meets hosted at this site and have made it a premier and sought after venue for meet organizers, clubs and swimmers. Additionally, many cyclists and mountain bikes from all over the Bay Area come to Morgan Hill to enjoy our rural roads and mountain trails.

The City is also surrounded by the following nearby amenities:

Anderson Lake County Park is Santa Clara County's largest reservoir. The 3,144-acre Anderson Park is a magnet for power boat enthusiasts, bicyclists, equestrians, picnickers and nature lovers.

Henry W. Coe State Park is the largest state park in northern California, with over 87,000 acres of wild open space. The park offers hiking, backpacking, camping, biking, finishing and horse riding. The Dowdy Visitor Center is located at the southeast of the park.



CordeValle is a Rosewood luxury resort located in San Martin just minutes south of Morgan Hill. The resort offers a 7,169-yard championship golf course, 45 rooms, 5,000-SF of flexible meeting event space for up to 200 guests, tennis, a luxury spa, and Clos La Chance winery and vineyard.

Coyote Creek Golf Course is located in south San Jose and offers two 18-hole golf courses designed by Jack Nicklaus. The on-site restaurant offers breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Wineries of Santa Clara Valley are located all throughout Morgan Hill and the surrounding communities. Silicon Valley was the first premium wine production region, yet it seems to be the most unknown. The area offers dozens of wineries including award winning wines produced by Guglielmo, Clos LaChance, Jason-Stephens, Kirigin and more.

Pick-your-Own Farms and Ranches offer Morgan Hill residents and visitors access to local farms, fresh fruits and vegetables and locally grown products. Agritourism is a growing trend by people that tend to be more health conscious that want to buy locally grown and organic products. There are dozens of farms and ranches where people come out to pick produce, meet farmers, pet animals and connect with where their food comes from. Santa Clara farmers and ranchers grow 100 different crops and contribute \$250 million to the local economy each year.

Regional Recreational Facilities include the Outdoor Sports Complex which offers the finest outdoor sports facility in Northern California with 38 acres that accommodate up to 25 fields. The Aquatics Center is a recreational competitive aquatic facility that offers a 50 Meter All-Deep Competition-Lap Pool, a 5,000 SF Recreational Pool, waterslides, a 6-lane lap pool, sprayground, concessions, event rooms and other amenities. This building received a LEED Certified Silver Award. Both recreational facilities attract regional and national competitions.



Downtown offers more than 35 eateries, including a Michelin Star chef restaurateur and many unique boutiques. The charming historic downtown offers south County residents a place to dine, stroll and celebrate. 250,000 people attend special events downtown and the Community & Cultural Center offers a 43,000-SF campus that attracts 50,000 visitors annually.

Lodging is ample in Morgan Hill with over 800 hotel rooms representing the major hotel flags, including the Hampton Inn, the Holiday Inn Express, and the Marriot Courtyard. Additionally, a luxury resort is just minutes away at Cordevalle with 45 rooms, a luxury spa, a championship golf course and 5,000-SF of meeting room space.

Family Fun Community that offers year 'round festivals and family-friendly activities for residents and visitors is the reputation that Morgan Hill is proud to have. Throughout the year, fun events for families, including the Haru Matsuri Japanese spring festival, the Mushroom Mardi Gras, the Taste of Morgan Hill, and the Freedom Fest events attract 250,000 million visitors annually. The area also offers many family-fun places to visit including Villa Miramonte (the Victorian-era ranch home of Hiram Morgan Hill and his wife) and the Wings of History Museum in nearby San Martin.



The Opportunity

Morgan Hill offers all the amenities that a weekend-get-away would offer (wineries, charming downtown, fine-dining restaurants, shops, outdoor facilities, etc.). However, many people, including our own residents, don't know about these great amenities. This creates a tremendous opportunity to brand the city as the perfect weekend destination, and as an alternative to the wine regions up north.

In the past, the Morgan Hill Redevelopment Agency supported tourism promotion by contributing resources to the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber partnered with Gilroy to promote the region to Central Coast venues. Previously, Morgan Hill was touted as the "Gateway to the Central Coast." With the dissolution of the Redevelopment Agency and the transition and repositioning of several community organizations, we have a unique opportunity to reinvent ourselves with a new brand and marketing campaign.

In late 2012, the Economic Development Division published new marketing materials, including a "Funstyle" piece that promoted Morgan Hill as the perfect weekend destination. The marketing materials showcased the community as a fun, active and attractive place to be and visit. This fresh perspective has been well received by the community and has instigated a deeper discussion among many different stakeholders about our goals for tourism promotion.

To that end, a Tourism Alliance was formed in early 2013 with a wide-range of community-based organization and hospitality industry representatives. The first Community Forum on Tourism was launched on April 18th. This report details the 70 ideas that were generated at the event.

In order to work with the community to implement these ideas, it is important to keep in mind that this renewed interest from different sectors of the community that is emerging around tourism will require significant nurturing and attention to help build these new coalitions and strengthen these relationships.

Another important task that is somewhat peripheral, yet perhaps even more important, is to help our business organizations stabilize and thrive. This includes working with the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Association, PBID, the Wineries of Santa Clara County, the Farm Bureau, the hotels and the restaurants. These organizations are at different stages of their formation, but all need to work in concert to promote the city as a whole and recognize that it is not one organization's job but rather everyone's responsibility to work together to create marketing collateral that show a complete picture of all the amenities Morgan Hill has to offer.

Local Industry Experts' Views

The Community Forum on Tourism included an Emerging Tourism Opportunity Panel where local industry experts that represented the hotel, restaurant, sports recreation and wine industries shared their experience of running a business in Morgan Hill and identified industry trends as well as opportunities for Morgan Hill.

Industry Panel

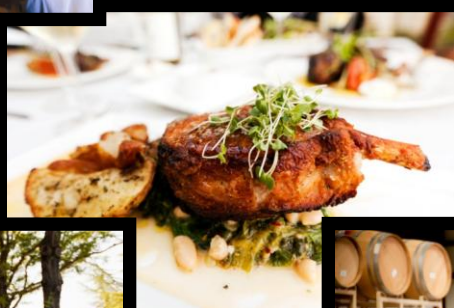
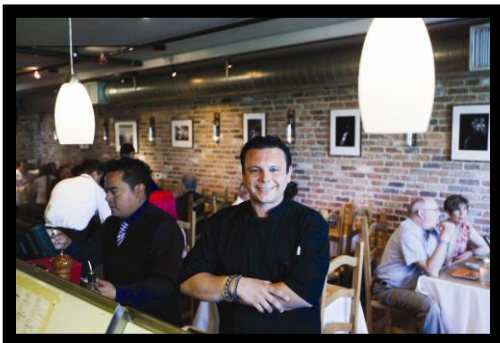
David Dworkin Holiday Inn Express	Greg Richtarek Guglielmo Winery
Jeff Dixon MHYSA	Salvatore Calisi Odeum Restaurant

Key Points from the Panel

The panel identified a number of opportunities that could improve tourism and their own businesses. Some common themes were shared among the panelists, including generating awareness, developing a brand, and working together to cross-promote. Here are some of the key suggestions provided by the industry experts:

- Awareness and marketing is needed to show the value of what Morgan Hill offers
- Everyone can and should act as a concierge
- Create a marketing piece to promote the area
- Be aggressive in our approach
- One person/business success is everyone's success
- Support each other and keep raising the bar in terms of customer service
- Competition is always good
- Reach out to the younger demographic
- Capture visitors that visit our sports recreational facilities

- Restaurants should sell local wine and cross-promote
- Wineries should promote local restaurants
- Start by attracting locals, south bay residents and tourists passing through or visiting for wine tours
- Social media is a great and efficient way to promote
- The key is bringing more attention to Morgan Hill
- Businesses can benefit by increasing traffic to Morgan Hill by attracting new restaurants and working with wineries to cross-promote
- Hospitality training is key
- Working together collaboratively will help attract more business, mold policy and create tourism
- Education of our assets needs to start with our residents, including residents of Gilroy and San Jose
- Create a consistent message with hotels and tourism partners
- Change the image of the “Gateway to the Central Coast”
- Grow the recreational offerings and attract more sporting events



Ideas from “Open MarketPlace”

Sports Destination

- ☐ Grow the recreational offerings and attract more sporting events
- ☐ Everyone can and should act as a concierge
- ☐ Capture visitors that visit our sports recreational facilities
- ☐ Awareness and marketing is needed to show the value of what Morgan Hill offers
- ☐ Create a marketing piece to promote the area



Agri-Tourism

- ☐ Organize a group of local farmers to get to know each other, brainstorm, pool resources, exchange ideas, build a community resulting in a Local Farmers Association
- ☐ Cross-market with wineries
- ☐ Collaborate with Gilroy/San Martin as a region
- ☐ Leverage knowledge and support of Farm Bureau
- ☐ Work with Open Space Authority



Wine Experience

- ☐ Create all-inclusive promotional packages
- ☐ Develop Collateral (brochures) for cross-promotion of venues
- ☐ Create different types of experiences for the visitor



Way Finding Signage for Wineries

- ☐ Install winery signage along Highway 101
- ☐ Develop a marketing program to promote wineries and Downtown
- ☐ Include all stakeholders in signage conversation, including County, City, Chamber, downtown, PBID, Wineries of SCV, Historical Society, Farm Bureau
- ☐ Create a Wine Trail
- ☐ Utilize existing billboards to buy advertisement space
- ☐ Need to develop message to get people off the road: wineries, food, history, shopping, recreation
- ☐ Develop a recognizable sign for the Wine Trail like a “Wine Glass”



Open Space Tourism

- ☐ Create area maps and mobile apps for open space lands and trails and preserves
- ☐ Include restaurants, hotels, and events information
- ☐ Distribute maps at Gilroy Outlets, and other venues in and out of Morgan Hill
- ☐ Create an attractive brand and signage
- ☐ Establish a Welcome Center that is staffed in the weekends and evenings
- ☐ Encourage equestrian trail users to eat and shop in Morgan Hill, provide corrals for horses and parking for rigs
- ☐ Provide year-round organized events—e.g. all-day hikes that begin with breakfast or dinner at a Downtown restaurant or that includes an overnight stay
- ☐ Create agri-tourism “council” who contribute to a centralized marketing fund to promote local agriculture and products
- ☐ Support creation of a trail at El Toro Mountain
- ☐ Support multiple activities to promote Morgan Hill as a destination
- ☐ Activate parks and preserves to promote activities and businesses



Downtown Activation

- ☐ Improve advertising of events by collaborating with the Chamber and Downtown Association
- ☐ Improve alternative modes of transportation offerings, including offering Segways for rent, improving bike lanes and providing a shuttle service to ease access around Downtown
- ☐ Offer activities that will keep people in Downtown longer like a wine tasting room, an ice rink and a hotel
- ☐ Support development of additional venues, like a natural park/trail along the creek with interpretive features
- ☐ Centralize schedule of events to promote different events and activities
- ☐ Make Downtown friendly to families
- ☐ Support development of a Downtown hotel
- ☐ Improve signage to find Downtown Association and Chamber offices
- ☐ Explore feasibility of creating a historical walk/tour for Downtown structures
- ☐ Support development of a Gallery downtown
- ☐ Support live music and entertainment
- ☐ Consider developing a gateway sign for Downtown
- ☐ Consider signage to draw people Downtown
- ☐ Engage High Schools with programs in Downtown like an agricultural kids spring fair
- ☐ Explore events that will attract Hispanic community



100% Local Wine Tasting Co-Op

- ☐ Create a 100% businesses that offers wine tastings and locally produced consumables in Downtown
- ☐ 100% Local Wine Tasting Room can act as a Central Welcome Center for the Wineries
- ☐ 100% Local Wine Tasting Room can offer people something to do and it would highlight local businesses and offer a place to distribute information about local events



Community Calendar

- ☐ Create a central calendar of events that is all inclusive and user friendly and allows to sort by activity type
- ☐ Same information should be linked to community groups, wineries and other businesses
- ☐ Use Blast Emails to distribute information
- ☐ Need to create new Morgan Hill slogan
- ☐ Improve Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center building signage
- ☐ Work with existing groups to coordinate efforts, including Chamber of Commerce, Shop Morgan Hill, Morgan Hill Life



Cross Promotions

- ☐ Create a central site that offers information about businesses and events
- ☐ Develop a concierge map and distribute to businesses
- ☐ Create smart phone application that tells visitors how to find local businesses and attractions
- ☐ Develop a marketing campaign using billboards, bus ads, and marketing at sports events



- ☐ Consider shuttle service to bring people from shopping centers, sports centers and parking areas to Downtown
- ☐ Develop a common message—a tag line
- ☐ Focus on educating Morgan Hill community (staff, residents, businesses)
- ☐ Have an active presence in social media websites. Ensure information is fresh and current
- ☐ Utilize existing resources



Wakeboard Park

- ☐ Support a wakeboard park in or near Morgan Hill
- ☐ Explore locations where a wakeboard park is viable
- ☐ Identify more sports recreation areas
- ☐ Work with County Parks, State Parks, Water District and local businesses like Fox Racing



Downtown Theatre

- ☐ Consider activating Granada Theatre to bring activities to Downtown
- ☐ Invest in making infrastructure improvements



Action Plan

The April 18th Community Forum on Tourism was the first of many discussions that need to take place to develop a comprehensive Tourism Strategy for Morgan Hill. The changing climate due to the loss of Redevelopment and the transition and evolution of our community-based organizations provides for an optimum environment to allow the generation of new ideas, the engagement of new people and development of new coalitions that will champion these ideas.

It is important to take advantage of the momentum and excitement that exists within our community around this topic and to develop an action plan with milestones to track progress on the various initiatives. Some ideas are already getting traction like the coalition of hotels, restaurants wineries and transportation services that are developing and selling all-inclusive visitor packages. While those ideas that have a champion behind them will proceed at a faster rate, it is important to be strategic and focus on the key priorities.

The immediate Action Plan has four basic steps:

1. Staff in partnership with the Tourism Alliance should prioritize the following items and conduct a progress report before the end of the calendar year:
 - a. Develop a common message that brands Morgan Hill as a tourism destination.
 - b. Develop a central community calendar of events that is all-inclusive, comprehensive and user-friendly.
 - c. Develop marketing collateral that “tells the full story” of the amenities Morgan Hill has to offer, including wineries, restaurants, recreational venues, open space, pick-your-own farms and ranches; and that identifies Downtown and other shopping opportunities.
 - d. Cross-promote local businesses by having businesses act as concierges, directing visitors to other attractions.
 - e. Develop a wine-signage program that includes freeway signage and a multijurisdictional wine trail.
 - f. Activate Downtown and offer more activities for the visitor, in addition to dining and shopping.
 - g. Grow the recreational offerings and attract more sporting events.

2. Expand the Tourism Alliance to include representatives from the Farm Bureau, the Open Space Authority, and the Santa Clara County staff and any other key regional partners needed to execute the tourism strategies.
3. Engage the Tourism Forum participants and provide a platform for people to engage and advance other strategies in addition to the seven top items identified above.
4. Explore ways to collaborate and engage other agencies and continue to support and nurture organizations forming around the tourism strategy.

Tourism can be an important driver for the Morgan Hill economy. The tourism strategy should focus on promoting Morgan Hill as a weekend destination that offers many attractions, including dozens of wineries, U-Pick farms and ranches, state-of-the art recreational facilities, open space for the outdoor lifestyle and a charming downtown with a burgeoning restaurant scene. The tourism strategy should celebrate Morgan Hill's identity and clearly identify all of the offerings.

The community, including the residents, businesses, community-based organizations and the City need to share the tourism vision and the responsibility to implement it.

"Together we are stronger."

—David Dworkin, Holiday Inn Express